Congressional staff, nuclear utility representatives and members of Nuclear Energy Institute tour INL

Congressional staff, nuclear utility representatives and members of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) met with INL senior management while touring several INL facilities on Nov. 29. The group included staff for Sen. Robert Bennett (Utah), Sen. Lindsey Graham (S.C.), Sen. Larry Craig (Idaho), Sen. Lamar Alexander (Tenn.) and Rep. Bart Gordon (Tenn.). Also on the tour was staff for the U.S. House or Representatives Committee on Science, Energy Subcommittee, representatives from Entergy and Duke Energy as well as members of NEI-the policy organization of the nuclear energy and technologies industry.

Dave Richardson, associate laboratory director for Nuclear Operations, explains how the ATR is the only site in the world capable of performing certain experiments.

The tour began with an overview of INL history, safety and goals provided by INL senior management. Much of this discussion addressed the need to develop a new generation of nuclear scientists, technicians and engineers.

"We would like to do fewer and better experiments by developing better simulation-driven research," stated Finck, associate laboratory director for Nuclear Programs,. "It takes about ten years to create a qualified nuclear engineer. Therefore, we must be sure that the mentoring programs at the nation's laboratories receive adequate support."

After the morning meeting, the group conducted tours of the Advanced Test Reactor (ATR), Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (INTEC), and Materials and Fuels Complex (MFC). During the ATR visit, staff learned about the facility's unique design and capabilities, including experiments to produce cancer treatment products such as cesium.

Afterward at MFC, the group was briefed on the proposed Next Generation Nuclear Plant (NGNP) by INL's Rafael Soto, deputy project manager for NGNP. NGNP is a very high-temperature reactor concept capable of producing high-temperature process heat suitable for the economical production of hydrogen, electricity and other energy sources. The visit concluded with a dinner in Idaho Falls hosted by INL and NEI.

John Dwight, ATR program director, describes how cesium produced at the ATR can be used to treat cancer.

General Contact:
Glen Tait, (202) 475-2221,

Feature Archive